

Article 5: Fire Protection and Prevention

Division 10: Fire Protection Systems and Equipment

*("Fire Protection Systems and Equipment"
added 1-8-1996 by O-18242 N.S.)*

§55.1003 Fire Extinguishing Systems

1003.1 Installation Requirements through 1003.2.10 Existing High-rise Buildings. Sections 1003.1 through 103.2.10 of the C.F.C. (1998 Edition) have been adopted without change pursuant to section 55.0101(a).

1003.2.11 Existing Highrise Buildings.

1003.2.11.1 Purpose and intent. The Council hereby finds as a matter directly affecting public safety and the life safety of occupants of high-rise buildings and the public safety personnel involved in fire suppression activities in high-rise buildings that it is necessary to install fire sprinkler systems in all existing high-rise buildings, which were previously exempt from such installation. Those buildings in which such sprinkler systems have been installed under the provisions of Title 24, California Code of Regulations section Appendix 3413 are exempt.

1003.2.11.2 Definitions. For purposes of Section 55.1003, the following terms have the following definitions:

- (1) "High-rise building" means any building or structure of any type of construction or occupancy having floors used for human occupancy located more than seventy-five (75) feet above the lowest floor level having building access. "High-rise buildings" do not include:
 - (a) Hospitals as defined in health and Safety Code section 1250.
 - (b) Buildings used exclusively as open parking garages.
 - (c) Buildings where all floors above the seventy-five (75) foot level are used exclusively as open parking garage and are located above all other floors used for human occupancy.
 - (d) Buildings such as power plants, look-out towers, steeples, green houses and similar structures with noncontinuous human occupancy as may be determined by the Fire Chief.

- (e) Any buildings or structures owned by any government agency other than the City of San Diego.
 - (f) R-1 occupancies as defined in this San Diego Fire Code, except hotels and motels.
- (2) “Building access” means an exterior door opening that conforms to all of the following: (1) is suitable and available for fire department use; (2) is located not more than two feet above the adjacent ground level; (3) leads to a space, room or area having foot traffic communication capability with the remainder of the building; and (4) is designed to permit penetration through the use of fire department forcible-entry tools and equipment, unless other approved arrangements have been made with the Fire Chief.
- (3) “Owner” means every person who, or entity which, alone, jointly or severally with others has legal title to any building or structure or has the legal right to structurally alter or modify such building or structure.

1003.2.11.3 Applicability. Except as provided in section 55.1003.2.11.2, the provisions of section 55.1003.1 relating to installation of automatic fire sprinkler systems are hereby made applicable to all existing high-rise buildings, as defined in section 55.1003.2.11.2(1).

1003.2.11.4 Fire Sprinkler System. Automatic fire sprinkler systems required under section 1003.2.11 shall be installed in accordance with California Building Code Standard No. 9.1, with the express provision that any later standard that imposes more stringent fire and life safety requirement shall apply at the time of installation.

1003.2.11.5 Schedule of Implementation. Each owner of a high-rise building, as defined in section 55.1003.2.11.2(1) shall install an approved automatic fire sprinkler system in each high-rise building in accordance with the following schedule:

- (1) By January 1, 1990, the building owner shall submit a work plan to the Fire Chief for approval. The work plan shall include technical sprinkler drawings and a time table for complete installation in accordance with section 1003.2.11.5. The plan shall detail a schedule for completing the fire sprinkler system installation, giving priority to those floors in excess of seventy-five (75) feet above the lowest floor level having building access. The Fire Chief is authorized to modify the schedule in section.

55.1003.2.9.5 to accommodate long-term leases; once approved, however, the schedule and plans may not be further modified.

- (2) By January 1, 1993, one third (1/3) gross square footage of the structure shall be fire sprinklered.
- (3) By January 1, 1996, two-thirds (2/3) gross square footage of the structure shall be fire sprinklered.
- (4) January 1, 1999, the entire gross square footage of the structure shall be fire sprinklered.
- (5) The owner of a high-rise building or structure that is subject to the provisions of section 55.1003.9.2, and that contains significant quantities of asbestos that will interfere with such installations shall have the option of instead equipping the entire gross square footage of the building or structure with an automatic fire sprinkler system by January 1, 1996; provided, however, that under this option, the owner of the building or structure shall be deemed to have waived any further extension of time for compliance. In order to be eligible for this option, the owner must establish the presence of asbestos in the affected building, that it is impossible or impractical to complete the work in increments, with supporting rationale, and that the work plan submitted clearly demonstrates that all tenants will be vacated and all work will be completed within the specified time frame.

For purposes of section 55.1003.2.11.5, the gross square footage of a building or structure includes the sum total of all the floor areas for all floor levels, basements and sub-basements, measured from the exterior walls, irrespective of the existence of interior fire resistive walls, floors and ceilings.

Notwithstanding the compliance schedule above, any owner of any high-rise building or structure subject to the provisions of section 55.1003.2.11.5, which contains significant quantities of asbestos, who agrees in writing prior to January 1, 1996, to demolish the subject building, shall be exempt from compliance schedule set forth in section 55.1003.2.11.5.

The written agreement shall constitute a covenant running with the land. Such agreement shall be recorded in the office of the County Recorder, San Diego County. The recordable agreement from (demolition agreement) shall be provided by the City.

1003.2.11.6 Waiver of Other Provisions. The Fire Chief or Building Official is authorized to waive or modify any or all of the following provisions of the C.F.C. or the California Building Code as adopted by the City in Chapter IX of the San Diego Municipal Code when requiring the retrofitting or existing high-rise buildings with

automatic fire sprinkler systems pursuant to section 55.1003.2.11.5: (1) underground water storage tank will not be required; (2) fire pump size or installation can be reduced or eliminated, depending upon the adequacy of water pressure available to the building; (3) existing dead end corridors without intervening doors may be permitted; (4) existing ventilation shafts may be permitted; and (5) existing transoms may be allowed.

1003.2.11.7 Appeal and Modification provisions. The owner of a high-rise building covered under section 55.1003.2.11 may appeal a decision made by the Fire Chief under section 55.1003.2.11. An appeal shall be made to the City Manager. The Board of Appeals and Advisors shall serve as the hearing body for appeals under section 55.1003.2.11.7. For these purposes, the Board of Appeals may (1) recommend a variance from any provisions of section 1003.2.11; (2) the suitability of alternate materials and methods of sprinkler installation; and (3) may provide reasonable interpretations of section 55.1003.2.11, so long as such interpretations do not conflict with the purpose, intent and general objective of section 55.1003.2.11 nor extend the time for compliance established in section 55.1003.2.11.5.

The Board of Appeals may, in addition to any other considerations it deems appropriate, examine the architectural or historical significance of the building or structure. The City Manager shall thereafter consider the recommendations of the Board of Appeals and issue a final decision. The City Manager's decision shall constitute the owner's exhaustion of administrative remedies.

1003.2.11.8 Violations.

- (a) It is unlawful for any owner of a high-rise building to allow any person to occupy any portion of a high-rise building subject to the provisions of section 55.1003.2.11 except where: (1) the Fire Chief or City Manager has, in writing, authorized the occupancy; or (2) the owner is complying with the implementation schedule set forth in section 55.1003.2.11.5; or (3) the occupant is performing construction or maintenance to the building related to the installation or maintenance of an automatic fire sprinkler system; (4) the owner of the high-rise building agreed in writing prior to January 1, 2004 to demolish the high-rise building by January 1, 2000.
- (b) It is unlawful for any owner of a high-rise building to allow any person to occupy any portion of a high-rise building after January 1, 2000, where occupancy has been authorized pursuant to section 55.1003.2.11.8(a)(4), except where: (1) the occupant is performing minimal maintenance to prevent the high-rise building from being in an unsafe condition; or (2) the occupant is performing construction or maintenance to the building related to the

installation or maintenance of an automatic fire sprinkler system; or (3) an approved fire sprinkler system has been completely installed.

1003.3 Sprinkler System Monitoring and Alarms through 1003.4 Permissible Sprinkler Omissions. Sections 1003.3 through 1003.4 of the C.F.C. (1998 Edition) have been adopted without change pursuant to section 55.0101(a).
(Amended 6-5-2001 by O-18946 N.S.)